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SUBJECT: LIBERATION AND RECONCILIATION NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DELEGATE  
CLAIMS PLAN FOR INVESTMENT IN NINEWA

CLASSIFIED BY: Cameron Munter, PRT Leader, Provincial  
Reconstruction Team Ninewa, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) According to newly elected national assembly delegate Sheikh Mohammed Khalaf of the Reconciliation and Liberation Bloc, Iraq's new federal government needs to be more inclusive by "reaching out" to all parties in the country. Khalaf said he would work hard to help issues of unemployment and security in Ninewa. He said he believes basic services, such as clean water and paved roads, need to be addressed or he and other colleagues in the national assembly would be looking for new work come next election. Khalaf said he would like to lure international technology and automobile companies to the province to create jobs and allow Iraq to communicate better with the world economy. Khalaf suggested an end to de-Baathification so that former members of the regime could "participate" in the democratic process. End Summary.

2. (SBU) REO Poloff met with national assembly delegate Sheikh Mohammed Khalaf Hasan and assistant Sulaiman Shaheen from the Reconciliation and Liberation Bloc (#516) in Qaraqosh on February 10. Sheikh Khalaf is a member of the Al Juburi tribe and resides in Quyarrah district in Ninewa. He claimed to have worked behind the scenes of a failed coup and assassination attempt by the Al Juburi tribe against Saddam Hussein in 1991. He claimed he and a fellow #516 member, Mashaan Al Juburi, sought and received refuge from current President Jalal Talabani in Iraqi Kurdistan shortly after. Khalaf said he was interrogated by Saddam Kamel (son-in-law to Hussein) and Qusay (Hussein's son) and set free, where he returned to Ninewa to continue his work as a professor of agricultural engineering at Mosul University's Hamam Al Halil agriculture college. Khalaf later served in the Iraqi government council as an independent from 1996 to 1999.

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"REACHING OUT" IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT  
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3. (C) Khalaf said the key to the new central government's success will be how well all sides "reach out" to each other. He said the new government should be representative of all, not just "one group." Khalaf said he fears "sectarian parties" since he believes they tend to discriminate against those who do not share their beliefs. However, he said he realizes Shias are the majority in Iraq and would do his best to work with them "without prejudice." Poloff asked Khalaf if his experience with Talabani when he was "in hiding" endeared him to the Kurds. Khalaf said he has always been "sympathetic" to the Kurds, but that he does "not support everything they do." He suggested the way to have better relations among ethnic groups is that the nation needed to move beyond "revenge" and realize past grievances should be forgiven. Khalaf said, however, many of his colleagues and constituents do not share his liberal view.

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ADDRESSING UNEMPLOYMENT  
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4. (C) Khalaf said the most important issue affecting Iraq today is security. He said besides this problem, the new central government should concentrate on three important areas: clean water, electricity, and paved roads. He said if the problem with lack of basic services is not addressed he and his colleagues would be looking for new jobs come next election. Khalaf said high unemployment has contributed to discontent and terrorism. Khalaf felt more should be done to invest in Ninewa's college graduates. He said since 1987 many have not been employed, "wasting the investment" that the country has made. Khalaf said he would work to create an office where recent graduates could go to seek employment and receive training while waiting for jobs to open up. This, according to Khalaf, would also help keep young people from slipping into nefarious activities such as terrorism and petty crime.

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BRINGING INVESTMENT TO NINEWA

15. (C) Poloff asked Khalaf if he had any ideas on how to create jobs for the graduates, as well as help attract private investment to the province. Khalaf said he has several ideas to help Ninewa. The first, he said, would be to attract high-tech companies to build a plant in the province. He said there are many engineers who are "ready to work" and the investment would "improve communications technology" as well. Khalaf said Ninewa is "very fertile" and that more resources should be dedicated to farming. He suggested luring an automobile company, from the U.S. or other country, to build an assembly plant in Ninewa. He said such a factory would create jobs as well as allow for cars to be more affordable. Lastly, Khalaf said Iraq should have more oil refineries to produce and refine its own oil instead of buying it from neighboring countries.

DE-BAATHIFICATION SHOULD END

16. (C) Khalaf said one point he would try to push in the new national government would be to find ways to include former Baathists in the democratic process. Khalaf said he believes de-Baathification has "done nothing" but marginalize a segment of the population by keeping them from participating in democracy. He said the de-Baathification process has "contributed to terrorism" since they are "left out of Iraq's future." He said that more should be done to bring them in before the "problem worsens."

COMMENT

17. (C) This was our first encounter with Sheikh Khalaf and the Reconciliation and Liberation Bloc in Ninewa. We came away with a good impression of Khalaf and can assume he is somewhat of a pragmatist who has the best intentions of his constituents and his country in mind. However, he must work within the confines of a constituency that does not necessarily share his liberal attitudes towards Shias and Kurds. For instance, Khalaf said party leader Mashaan Al Juburi led the coalition's campaign speaking out against USG and CF presence in Iraq, referring to them as "occupiers." To his credit, Khalaf told Poloff he did not agree with Al Juburi's tactics for "personal and moral reasons," and believed it cost the coalition votes in five of the eight provinces in which they had candidates. While from the Sunni Arab tribal community in Ninewa, Khalaf said enough of the right things -- addressing issues of basic social services, security, and an agenda to "reach out" across ethnic and religious lines -- that he may very well be a positive force within the new government. We will continue to build on our relationship with Khalaf and track his progress in the new national assembly.

MUNTER